

New Years Independence Resolution aka IJKLMNOP

c 1992

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"Just admit it", Phil said to Sharon, "You and I are exact opposites in almost every way"!

She looked at him coldly, almost with hostility and didn't say anything she was good and mad already.

"You're the only one for me, I want to stay with you till I die!", he said as she went inside.

Phil went thought to himself, he had joined the counterculture and his wife Sharon had stayed with the "establishment" point of view. She would like for everyone to be straight and do what they're told to do all the time according to the "establishment's" standards. He didn't live that way, and now he had finally decided that this would be the year that he would do things his way, no more saying "I'm sorry", and apologizing for being who he was. He didn't embrace the whole counter culture by any means, but he didn't reject everything that he'd learned in the 70's and early 80's like she seemed to want him to.

Their very brief conversation ended and Phil went outside to play catch with Joey.

Joey's throws were real good, but his catching skills needed a lot more practice if he wanted to make it in the big leagues.

Joey was not pleased with the way he was playing. "I stink", he said with a self-disgusted look on his face.

"Don't feel sorry for yourself, ever", Phil told Joey in a kind voice. "You should thank God for everything he gave you and he gave you a lot". Joey was tall, strong, smart and handsome, that a lot more than most people are born with.

Then something occurred to Phil. He had not really been mulling it over in his mind, it more or less just came to him. Nothing profound, nothing really exciting, but it came to him and it made him stop in his tracks.

Whoosh!!! The hardball whizzed past his glove, which was by now limp at his side. "Dad", Joey shouted, "what are you doing?"

Phil snapped back to reality. "Sorry Buddy, I missed that one didn't I". "You sure did Dad, you just stood there like a Dummy!".

Being a typical seven year old, Joey emphasized the word Dummy.

"Joey let's quit playing for a while", Phil shouted across the yard. "You're doing great catching high pops, but you need to practice your grounders more".

Joey was disappointed, he was getting into playing catch for the first time. Those high pops were getting easy for him and it made the practice fun.

Phil left and Joey started throwing against the garage door instead, this way the ball would roll back to him like a grounder.

Inside the house, Phil rushed to the den and started typing at the word processor.

"I hereby declare my independence from the New World Order, from the Old World Order and from anyone else that wants to decide what's best for me". He pounded the words out quickly on the keyboard. "I am here and now forming the "Individuality Party", his fingers flowed over the keys with the skill of years of practice. Then to add a little edge to his statement he cynically added, "and for now on whatever I say goes!"

"Most of all this is a Declaration of Independence from the president and the United Nations New World Order. As an individual endowed with certain inalienable rights, I serve notice that your New Order and your Old Order has no jurisdiction over me as long as I'm alive".

Just then, Joey walked into the office, the smell of smoke was still just barely present and his "Hardy Boy" son was about to bust him.

"Dad, you've been smoking something haven't you", his tone didn't contain the shock and amazement that it had the first time he had busted his dad. "Maybe your right, maybe your wrong", Phil told Joey in response to his son's several questions about had he been smoking. "But in either case, you'd be very smart to never even try the stuff", Phil felt a little hypocritical but went on, "it makes you lazy, it's bad for your health and it could separate you from God".

Phil wanted to share his latest short story with Sharon and he wondered if he should show it to her now. Upon reconsideration, he decided to wait a while and let them get in the new house first. He thought she might be mad enough to divorce him and since he thought that she and the kids would be better off in the new house, he'd try and wait till they moved in and got settled. But of course if she preferred to stay in their present house that was fine too.

In a minute, Phil left that room and surprisingly Joey left without any more questions. He hadn't forgotten what he smelled but he still didn't know what was going on with the smell in his dad's office. In a couple or few years, he would know all about it and form his own opinions about his dad and his preferences. Phil didn't go for the establishment's line that he had an 'addiction', he saw it as more of a preference. He preferred smoking to drinking and he wasn't going to ever accept their propaganda on the subject.

"Mama Mia, Papa Pia", Phil said jokingly as they got ready to go to the party. Joey was now brushing his teeth and he stopped long enough to complete the rhyme. "Baby's got the diareha", the seven and a half year old chimed in. "Oh no!", said Phil, "I didn't know you knew that one". "Sure dad, I know them all", said little Joey.

"I don't know why she puts up with that dog", Phil said, looking at the scene on their living room floor. Their two dogs Snoopy a Boston Terrier and Sparky a big white Shepard/Malamute, were licking each other's faces, making it appear that they were kissing and loving each other. "They're probably getting some leftover food off each others faces", Sharon said smiling. It had to be for a practical reason, even though the two dogs did seem to love each other.

"You need to watch what you say around him", Sharon scolded. "He listens to everything you say".

"I know", Phil replied a little irritated, "so I'm not perfect, are you?"

Phil already was getting the feeling that this night was going to end up with the big, "I'm going to live my own life with you or with our you", statement.

The tension that usually developed before a party night was already creeping up on them. It left an air of uneasiness they would have to cut through if they wanted to have an enjoyable night out. Meanwhile the two parents continued to get the children ready for the babysitter. Joey was old enough now that he occasionally liked to watch sports on TV and tonight while his parents were out, he might catch a few minutes of the Colts football team.

"Dad, who do you want to win the game tonight", Joey said as he watched Phil put on his Colts hat. "I want the good guys to win", Phil answered. He really had no great affiliation for the team yet, the family had only been in the city for one year now and the Colts were not winning many games.

"Who are the good guys dad?", Joey asked sounding slightly confused. "They're the ones that comb their hair and brush their teeth and clean behind their ears!", Phil laughed, "now get ready for bed!"

"Dad, can I be a writer too when I grow up", Joey wondered out loud. "Sure", said Phil, "just go out and have some adventures so you'll have something to write about and be sure you live through them. Then even if you don't end up writing about them, you'll at least have stories to

remember". When he looked back on any 'adventures' that he may have had, Phil thought most of them looked more like disasters. Joey had been asking Phil to read some of his journal notes outloud and the child had gotten a kick out of the concocted stories - that is the ones that Phil didn't censor to the boy.

Most of all Phil wanted to share what he was writing about with his wife Sharon, but it never had happened.

He just didn't want Sharon to read his script and take it too personally. He had told her that she was "more or less" one of the two main characters in the story so she would probably think that every little verbal jibe was aimed at her. She would probably see them as verbal bullets and would feel hurt, this is not what Phil intended and he hoped that she would not take it that way.

At 8:30 Phil and Sharon arrived at Jack and Melissa's house for the New Years Eve party, there kids were with the babysitter. The party almost never came off, due to an argument between the guys and the gals over the type of refreshments to be consumed. Phil and Jack preferred the stronger varieties and the girls wanted less emphasis on getting wasted. "Don't bring anything illegal in this house or I'll call my dad in a skinny minute and have him pick me and the kids up!"

The gals didn't want Phil, Jack and anyone else to get too crazy, especially since Melissa's kids would be there, although they would be asleep. Phil and Sharon had a running argument about smoking and it seemed to him that she was herself as intoxicating as any drug he had ever tried. Phil had gotten a chuckle out of Jack when he compared women to a drug "yeah, they're the ultimate aphrodisiac", Jack had replied in agreement.

"They're more than just an aphrodisiac drug", Phil continued, they're the alpha and the omega of drugs and they don't want any competition from anything else that can go to your head".

Sharon and Melissa preferred going to parties with the people they knew from church - punch and cake and games type of parties.

"Why do you have to get wasted?", Sharon had asked him earlier in the day as they shopped for queso and chips.

"How are you going to survive at the church party next week", she asked him sarcastically, "you'll have to be sober all evening".

"I don't mind being sober at their party", Phil shot back, "but it is nice to be around 'real people' too and like you're so fond of saying they don't act very natural unless they've had a few drinks". "Well, I'm just trying to do the same thing and I'm not apologizing to you for being that way".

A drunk man at a party isn't much different than a preacher on a roll thought Phil. They both are like broken records; both only talk, neither listens and they both think they know it all. He was reminded of what the

old baseball manager being interviewed on TV the other day had said - he, "couldn't stand a drunk man when he was sober or a sober man when he was drunk!"

"I'm not getting wasted", he answered irritably, "but if you're going to put conditions on what I can and can't do, then I'll just stay home". It was a common argument between them. "I don't mind if your churchfriends come too", Phil went on, "I'll party with anyone as long as they don't turn me in". "Heck maybe they'll actually 'come to'", he chuckled to himself at the little pun.

Jack's brother Bill and his fiance, Rhonda, were coming too and that was part of the problem, since they were hard core partiers and proud of it.

Bill and Rhonda arrived at 10:00, along with another friend. Rhonda was quick off the marks, "I'm singing bass tonight" she informed the roomfull of people, "I've got larangitis". This was said in reference to her winter cold, which a lot of the group had also had recently.

It would turn out that she talked a blue streak regardless of her larangitis and fancied herself as chic, despite her plain looks. "She must think big boobs go a long, long way", thought Phil.

The chick who played Vicky Dale in the Batman video was pretty damn hot thought Phil. He could watch her all day, Even with that attempt at an scared ugly look she had on her face when the joker pointed the gun at her.

Sharon hadn't noticed him watching the vide so intently, but she sure noticed him get up in a hurry to go out and burn one. "I wouldn't have gone outside so abruptly, except that at the rate that Rhonda was talking, I would have missed it all if I waited for her to come to a stopping point".

Phil had resorted to going to Jack's bathroom to write in peace. Between Sharon's looks and the probability of making everyone else think he was a kook, he decided it was better to find a private place for a couple minutes to jot down his thoughts before he forgot them. "Too much aggravation", he thought, "I can't do anything in peace".

Rhonda's advice on raising children sounded hollow to Phil. She was an ice skating instructor and trained kids for competition. Her clients were the children of Chicago's rich people. "I don't need children", she had said. "I already have seventeen of them", she went on. "They listen to me like I'm a general and they'll worship me when I'm ninety, why should I have my own?"

She was profuse with her opinions on raising the, "dear little devils", but Phil wouldn't pay an ounce of salt for advice compared to Lisa's or Sharon's, who between them were raising six kids.

There was a loud knock on the bathroom door, "hey what are you doing in there!", shouted Rhonda, "writing a book or something!".

"Damn it", muttered Phil to himself. "Sharon must be telling everyone what I'm doing". Telling people that he was trying to be a writer was something she did that Phil didn't like.

He reacted angrily, "I'll be out in a minute, so get lost!" Phil generally was less polite to women who were not super pretty. A chauvanist to the core Sharon called him. Phil wrote feverishly to get the last lines down on the napkin so that he could leave the bathroom in a reasonable amount of time and save face when he rejoined the others. Meanwhile he was getting hung up on words. Phil didn't like a lot of adjectives in his writing, he thought that good writing shouldn't require a lot of adjectives, let the reader use his imagination a bit. Phil wanted to achieve the kind of sparse hard hitting, descriptive language that he heard in the oral story telling of country folks. In his opinion they had the best expressions, not real wordy, but really on the mark. Unfortunately his writing style still had a long way to go.

Soon the gang was going outside to burn another one, since Lisa had made the house off-limits for smoking. Phil decided to pass on a buzz this time. It would be a good test of his will and would score a point or two with Sharon although that wasn't important at this point. "I probably should limit myself to smoking once a month at the most, instead of every two weeks", he thought to himself. Phil didn't want to announce his intentions to Sharon, since it would probably be self-incriminating, he would rather plead the fifth, because now he'd decided to do it whenever he wanted to.

At his lowest point years ago, he had averaged about 5 times a day, so in his opinion he'd come a long way, but Sharon still was far from satisfied.

"New Years resolution?", said Phil. "Yeah, I'm renewing the one I made last year and this time I hope to make it work!".

"I don't remember what your resolution was last year", Sharon said puzzled. "It was to be as real man for a change, and not let anyone run my life or censor me", he said proudly. "Oh God, give us all a break", Sharon groaned.

The party broke up at about 1:00 and Phil and Sharon went home. They spoke as the car maneuvered the wet streets.

"Lisa thinks Rhonda knows what she's talking about", said Sharon. "I'm surprised to hear that", Phil replied.

"Yeah, Rhonda's smart and and she even called herself aggressive" Sharon went on, "I like that in a lady, although personally, I prefer to just be assertive of my rights".

"Assertive, aggressive, what's the difference", said Phil. "Either way, you all have the right to ruin a guys life with just one phone call to your lawyer".

"Don't start that", Sharon said. "I can't help it if your a wimp". She always chastised him when he started 'bitching and feeling sorry for himself'. It was New Years Eve and soon the champagne would be flowing.

"Well anyway", said Phil, "I wouldn't go along with any of what Rhonda had to say" back there. "Thats funny", Sharon teased, "you were nodding your head everytime she opened her mouth".

"Just humoring her", Phil replied.

"Look", said Sharon, "you know I hate the way you act when you smoke, I don't understand why you do it when you know how much I hate it. I wouldn't do anything like that if it bothered you so much!"

Phil considered for a few seconds and then spoke, "honey, why don't you tell me why you hate the way I act when I smoke and maybe I can change the way I act. That's going to work better than trying to get me to stop".

"you can get lung cancer and hhat what God says, then it must be so. After all the two thousand or so years of people not having a chance to hear his name might just be a drop in the bucket of time. Maybe in the future so many people from these nations would know Christ, that the hundreds of millions that the "know it alls" said were condemned to eternal damnation would be an insignificant number.

Still it seemed that there might be other interpertations of the Bible that were possible, especially in view of the teachings of such people as Armstrong who held that the King James version was possibly mistranslated when it came to such important words as hell. You ought to just accept that you were lucky to be born in a Christian nation and do your best to enlighten the unbelievers said Vaughn. Phil scratched his head and pondered.

Phil told Vaughn, musicians should be more publically responsible. Music is really the "peoples" art more than anything else. So many young people are affected by music so much, they practically worship it . Painting, photography, dance and other forms are mostly esteemed by more mature people that aren't likely to do crazy things based on the feelings aroused by their art. Even a Maplethorpe exhibit is not quite as likely to cause someone to go off the deep end as easily as a rock song.

It seems to me that you'd be hard pressed to sell a religion like orthodox Christianity to people that revere their ancestors, like the Japanese and others. They are going to find the message rather strange, that all of their ancestors are burniing in hell eternally, because they did not believe in a savior that they never heard of.

It's like them trying to scare people from thinking, debat=ing, discussing ideas or writing. They say that if your ideas are not approved by them, then you are probably a false prophet or antiChrist. Then end result is that people are often afraid to ask any questions or use their mind at all. Christianity obviously should be able to hold up to

scrutiny.. Granted we may not understand everything in God's word, or be capable of such understanding, but do not crucify us for not accepting all of your "pat" answers as the Gospel.

As far as protecting democracy in our hemisphere, we're probably going to have to make a stand somewhere and defend it somewhere sometime. By having the Latin Americans fight each other are we selfishly putting off the inevitable to save another generation of American boys, by having people who generally may not give a damn kill each other. Phil said, "for once in my life I'd like to do something brave, just send me out and I'll fight for you General, with or without my knee operation, just send me out" maybe it's right, maybe it's not, but if going there now saves my son's generation from having to sacrifice themselves, then I'm ready to go, even if it doesn't solve anything, but just gives them some time".

Phil as usual had a tear in his eye, Sharon might or might not, he did not know cause he couldn't look at her. The segment of 20/20 was about a Unitarian minister and his books about life such as All he knows he learned in kindergarten or something like that. Phil was touched and of course in his mind couldn't imagine how anyone else couldn't be. But then it all depends on where you're sitting to view something. As soon as the words Unitarian minister came out of Barbara Wlaters mouth, the man undoubtably lost a world of credibility in many peoples opnions, probably in Sharons(just as a tent show evangelist would to an agnostic). To Phil it seemed a statement of the obvious, just as the previous segment on the man disconnecting his commatose son from a respirator was, just as the ministers analogy of our lives being like the life of the itsy bitsy spider going up the water spout and it's being washed down and it's trying again the next day when the sun comes out. It was all so perverse and all so simple and all so incomprehensible when we sit on opposite sides of the fence struggling like the car commercial that came on next, for the infinite quest for perfection.

Just learn from the kids when you can phil said, they sometimes know the answer to how to conduct ourselves, when we don't. They take the natural course of action, while we often do what we think the people around us want us to do. Not just in how to behave, but also in how to do things like walk and breath. Phill notice that Tyler always seemed to be pulling himself up tall and filling his lings with a big blast of air. Just what he needed to face the giants he was surrounded by. Phil didn't recall many elderly people doing this, but the ones he'd seen were the most vibrant looking. Phil also decided that he had to be as brutally honest as possible with the kids. So far he had tiptoed on the line of the truth and lies touching down often. He had to take responsibility for his decision to do the things he currently believed in like smoking and at least admit to his frailties to his children, even if it might not be the best thing to do. He still had hing profound, not even remotely, but smoking helped him to feel the parts of his body moving and working like a machine. A not so well oiled machine at this time. As an out of shape 35 year old, he noticed a few kinks and catches in his joints. By excersising his face

and learning how to hold his jaw, Phil thought he could breath and hear better. Unfortunately he looked a little strange when he experimented with his body parts in public. Some folks get offended when they see kid's doing this - much less an adult. Phil didn't care anymore, he was going to do what he wanted to and stop letting anyone make his decisions for him any more.

"Yeah, I'll even start using that big front mollar to set my jaw so it will jut out like a movie star", Phil was thinking to himself more than a little in jest. Smoking pot usually made him "feel" more in touch with his body and he believed that he could tell that he could hear better and generally feel better when he jutted his lower jaw out as far a possible, like a full blown Hapsburg jaw.

Phil wondered sometimes about who he was as far as what his role in the everlasting theater of life and it was hard for him to know which member of the cast of characters he was. He really hoped that he could be a prophet of the good word and even a very minor one would be a great honor. He also hoped that he was not a prophet of evil and that if he were that he would be quickly struck down before he could do much damage.

write poems too, since rough drafts can be put in that form more easily than into story form.

THE NAIL THAT STICKS UP GETS HAMMERED

(Picture of Phil's head in a row of nails and a hammer coming down)

It seemed quite possible that God would make the world so orderly and at the same time so incomprehenisble. Why would he reveal his truth to a bunch of Hebrew desert dwellers and make it so uncomfortable for other nationalities to believe this truth.

It obviously was a little tougher for a Hindu or Moslem to believe that Jesus was the only true son of God born of a virgin. Especially when their nations often warred with the Christians and Jews. And why would God make it seemingly more difficult for hundreds of generations of people from Africa, China and elsewhere to get to heaven if as the Christians

Oh well, Phil thought, if t

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